DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 125 826 RC 009 310

AUTHOR	Frese, Wolfgang; Nontasak, Natree
TITLE	Hopes and Fears of Open Country Families in Six Mississippi Counties.
INSTITUTION	Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, State College.
SPONS AGENCY	Cooperative State Research Service (DOA), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	USDA-CSRS-S-79
PUB DATE	1 Feb 76
NOTE	11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (73rd, Mobile, Alabama, February 1-4, 1976)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Anxiety; Caucasians; Children; Economics; *Expectation; Financial Needs; Heads of Households; Health Needs; Housing Needs; *Low Income Counties; Need Gratification; Negative Attitudes; Negroes; *Racial Differences; *Rural Areas; Social Change; *Southern States; Surveys; Tables (Data)
IDENTIFIERS	*Mississippi; Quality of Life

ABSTRACT

Between 1972 and 1973, 183 white and 148 black household heads and/or homemakers living in 6 low income, open country, Mississippi counties were interviewed for purposes of identifying and comparing family fears/worries and wishes/hopes. About 40% of the respondents were retired or disabled, and the majority were: female; over 50 years old; lacking a completed high school education; and low skilled workers. Results indicated that of those who responded to the question about fears/worries, 37.5% said they had none; blacks averaged 1.28 (fears/worries) per person; and whites averaged 1 each. Although the rank order was different for blacks and whites, the fears/worries cited most frequently were in the economics, health, and children categories. Of those responding to the wishes/hopes question, 17.9% stated that they had none; blacks averaged 1.66 wishes/hopes per person; and whites averaged 1.15 each. The wishes/hopes most frequently cited were in the areas of economics, health, housing, and children. Comparison of the fears/worries category with the wishes/hopes category revealed a significant similarity. Although the Mississippi quality of life as measured by socioeconomic indicators had improved between 1960 and 1970, the responses of both groups indicated preoccupation with the lower level needs on a need hierarchy. (JC)

Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original.

ED125826

nc280776

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

HOPES AND FEARS OF OPE NTRY FAMILIES IN SIX MISSISSIPP UNTIES

By
Wolfgang Frese
Tatree Nontasak**

INTRODUCTION

The quality of life for Mississippians seems to have increased between 1960 and 1970. In general, this was the case with respect to most of the indicators measuring income, poverty, employment, education, housing, health and welfare for the state as a whole (Sollie, et. al., 1975) and for the six low income counties (Frese, et. al., 1975 a, b, c, and Jones et. al.) included in this study.[1] Given that more families have their basic needs fulfilled they should become increasingly more preoccupied with higher level needs (See Clark, 1960 and Maslow, 1970). That is, just like individuals, one would expect "higher" family needs to become activated as "lower" ones are satisfied. By the same token, as the more basic economic, housing and safety needs are increasingly fulfilled one would expect that a family would want more elaborate needs fulfilled, e.g., vacation, a swimming pool, etc. This should be particularly true since the mass media, especially television, is increasingly reaching more families living in the southern rural areas (Frese, 1975) exposing them to a greater variety of consumer goods, better life styles, etc. The desire for and the fear of being deprived of certain needs should be reflected in the fears and worries and wishes and hopes of a family as expressed by its head or homemaker. Because our data is for only one time period it is not possible to examine changes in our variables through time, we can however determine at what level our open country respondents are with respect to their fears and worries and their wishes and hopes in 1972-1973 and if not completely at least partially support or refute the above reasoning.

More specifically, the main purpose of this paper is to examine the kinds of (a) fears and worries and (b) wishes and hopes that open country Mississippi families have. After determining the types of fears and worries and the types of wishes and hopes they will be compared.

METHODOLOGY

The Sample

County Selection Procedure

The S-79 regional research project (from which our data were obtained) is a follow-up of the S-44 project conducted in 1960, therefore, the counties in the S-79 study are those selected for the earlier study. In the S-44 study, the 1954 Farm Operators Family Level-of-Living Index (Hagood, 1957) was used in order to select a sample of low income counties in such a way as to assure their representativeness of those areas in the Southern Region with either substantially or ser-

RC009310

**Assistant Sociologist and Research Assistant, respectively, Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi. The data for this paper are from the Southern Regional Project S-79, "Rural Development and the Quality of Life in the Rural South."

Paper presented at the 73rd Annual Meeting of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, Mobile, Alabama, February 1-4, 1976.

iously low incomes. The six Mississippi counties selected were Clay, Coahoma, Holmes, Lawrence, Neshoba and Tunica. These counties are not contiguous but in separate parts of the state. Some pertinent social and economic characteristics for these counties are presented in Table 1.

Respondent Selection Procedure

An area sampling procedure was employed to obtain the sample of households to be interviewed. The six Mississippi counties included in the study were divided into small-area sample segments.[2] Next, a random selection of the small-area segments was obtained and within these segments a random sample of households was drawn. The number of households sampled in each segment was determined by a quota system (set forth in the S-79 guidelines).[3] The household head and/or homemaker was interviewed in order to assertain family fears and worries and wishes and hopes. In Mississippi, 183 white and 148 black households were interviewed between mid 1972 and mid 1973. Household respondents, as can be seen in Table 2, are predominately (a) female, (b) over 50 years old, (c) with less than a high school education and (d) in low skilled jobs. About 40 percent of the household respondents were retired or disabled.

Data Analysis

The questions dealing with wishes and hopes and fears and worries analyzed in this study were worded in the interview schedule as follows:

> All of us want certain things out of life for our families. When you think about things which really matter for your family, what are your wishes and hopes for the future? In other words, if you imagine your family's future in the best possible light, what would your family's life book look like then, if your family is to be happy?
> Take your time in answering: such things are not easy to put into words.
> #(Permissive probes) What are your hopes for the future? What would your family's life have to be like to be completely happy? What is missing for your family to be happy? Use also, if necessary, what are your dreams? Your desires? (Obligatory probe) Anything else?
>
> Now take the other side of the picture, what are your fears and worries about the future of your family? In other words, if you imagine your family's future in the worst possible light, what would your family's life look like then?
> Again, take your time in answering.
> #(Permissible probe) What would make for unhappiness? Stress the ideas of "fears" and "worries". (Obligatory probe) Anything else?

The answers to each of these questions were subjected to content analysis in order to develop two typologies, one dealing with fears and worries and the other with wishes and hopes. It should be pointed out that individuals were able to list more than one fear or worry and more than one wish or hope. Furthermore, for each question we included only those people who responded since we felt that the no responses were reacting differently from those who said they had no fears and worries or wishes and hopes. There were 43 individuals out of 331 (13.0 percent) who did not respond to the fears and worries questions and 19 people (5.7 percent) who did not respond to the wishes and hopes question.

RESULTS

Fears and Worries about the Future

Of the 331 interviewees, 288 responded to this question mentioning a total of 204 fears and worries about the future for an average of .71 per person. Of the 288 people who responded 37.5 percent (108) had no fears or worries about the future. A greater percentage of blacks who responded expressed fears and worries about the future (65.9%) than was true for white respondents (59.6%). Comparing the blacks and whites who had fears and worries we found that 87 blacks mentioned 111 fears and worries for an average of 1.28 per person while 93 whites mentioned one fear or worry each.

Table 3 contains a "typology"[4] of fears and worries which show that, for the total sample, economic fears and worries were mentioned most frequently (34.3%) followed by fears and worries about health (27.0%). Fears and worries related to the respondents' children were ranked third (23.5%). Crime was mentioned only 4.9 percent of the time while miscellaneous fears and worries amounted to 10.3 percent of those expressed. Comparing black and white respondents' ranking of the three categories most frequently mentioned shows an interesting difference. Black respondents mentioned economic fears and worries most often followed by fears and worries about their children and their health, respectively. White respondents mentioned health fears and worries most often followed very closely by economic fears and worries. Fears and worries about children also ranked third for whites.

Comparing specific fears in the economic category shows some interesting black-white differences. Black respondents were more worried about how to make money, receiving welfare and that their car would break down in the future than were white respondents. Whites were more concerned about being unable to pay bills, a depression, and business or farm failure than was true for blacks. Differences also existed in the children category, namely, whites mentioned fears and worries about the safety of their children more often than the blacks. On the other hand, blacks mentioned the inability to keep their children in school or college, their children's employment and that their children "will go wrong" more often than whites.

Wishes and Hopes for the Future

There were 353 wishes and hopes for the future mentioned by the 312 people who responded to this question or an average of 1.13 wishes or hopes per respondent. Only 17.9 percent (56) of the individuals who responded had no wishes or hopes for the future--16.8 percent of the black and 18.8 percent of the white respondents. The 114 blacks who had wishes and hopes mentioned a total of 189 or an average of 1.66 wishes and hopes each. Whites expressing wishes and hopes for the future numbered 142 with a total of 164 wishes and hopes or an average of 1.15 wishes and hopes per person.

Table 4 shows that for the total sample economic wishes and hopes were mentioned most often (26.4% of the time) followed by housing, health and then wishes and hopes about the respondents' children. Wishes and hopes about religion and the miscellaneous category were each mentioned less than eight percent of the time. Comparing the black-white ranking of the four most mentioned categories, the black respondents mentioned the economic category most often with the housing,

health, and children categories being mentioned about the same number of times. White interviewees' ranking of the top four categories was the same as it was for the total sample. The percentage difference for whites is less between the top two (economic and housing) categories than is the case for blacks.

Within the health and housing categories there is little difference between the specific wishes and hopes mentioned by blacks and whites. The other two categories, economic and children, did show some interesting racial variations. With respect to the economic category, blacks more often mentioned such things as getting more or better jobs, having more food and clothing, and being able to get a new car than whites. In the children category, the blacks were more concerned than whites about their children having a good marriage and being able to take care of their children and relatives, whites on the other hand were more concerned about their children being able to take care of themselves.

Fears and Worries versus Wishes and Hopes

Examining the results for those people in the total sample who responded shows that per person more wishes and hopes than fears and worries were mentioned. Excluding those who said they had no fears or worries and those who said they had no wishes and hopes about the future shows that on the average individuals still had more wishes and hopes (1.38 per person) than fears and worries (1.13 per person). Black-white comparisons indicate that both blacks and whites had more wishes and hopes per person than they did fears and worries.

Comparing fears and worries with types of wishes and hopes in Tables three and four shows a great deal of similarity, that is, categories and their rankings are very similar in the two tables. The main exception, housing, was second among the wishes and hopes but was placed in the "other" category among the fears and worries because it was mentioned only twice as a fear or worry. Crime related fears and worries comprised only about five percent of the total fears and worries while crime related wishes and hopes were not specifically mentioned at all. Religion on the other hand comprised about eight percent of the wishes and hopes while only one individual mentioned that they were worried that their family wouldn't "live for the Lord."

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this paper we typed the fears and worries and wishes and hopes of open country Mississippi families. Examining fears and worries at an abstract level it was discovered that of those who responded to the question about fears and worries 37.5 percent said they had none. Black respondents who had fears and worries averaged 1.28 per person while the white respondents averaged one each. The types of fears and worries most frequently mentioned dealth with economics, health and children. Although their rank order is different for blacks than whites these three types of fears and worries were primary for each group.

A look at the wishes and hopes of open country Mississippi residents shows that of those who responded to this question 17.9 percent stated that they had none. Black respondents expressed an average of 1.66 wishes and hopes per person while white respondents averaged 1.15 each. The wishes and hopes fell primarily into four categories: economic, housing, health and children.

Comparing types of fears and worries with types of wishes and hopes showed a surprising similarity in categories. The major difference being the housing

category included in the four most mentioned wishes and hopes, it was mentioned only twice as a fear or worry and thus put in the "other" category in that typology. It is interesting to note the least mentioned category in each typology - crime in the case of fears and worries and religion in the case of wishes and hopes.

Relating these findings to our earlier discussion of a hierarchy of needs we found that most of the fears and worries about the future dealt with being deprived of very basic needs, those which would fall rather low in the hierarchy. For example:

Not having enough money to get along.
Afraid my car is going to break down.
I worry about my health.
Not being able to send the children to school.

No one mentioned any needs which would be extremely high on the hierarchy such as the family being deprived of taking a trip to Europe or being unable to purchase a yacht.

Similar results were obtained with respect to most of the wishes and hopes of open country families. Typical examples included the following:

Hope we can always continue to have plenty of food.
To get an inside bath because I believe it will make us happier.
Hope that the girl (Ellie Jean) can find a good husband and a father for her baby. Her future husband ran off and left her before they were married.
Would like to have some cows and do some farming.
I would like to buy some more milk cows and get to heaven when I die.

The more elaborate wishes and hopes mentioned included such things as getting a new house or hoping their children will be able to go on a trip. As with the case of fears and worries, there were no wishes and hopes which would fall near the top of the hierarchy (e.g. wishing for a Rolls Royce and chauffeur, a two year trip around the world for the entire family, etc.).

Perhaps those who said they had no fears or worries (37.5%) and those who said they had no wishes or hopes (17.9%) have all of their needs fulfilled. While this may be true for some, many of our none responses were of a fatalistic rather than of a satiated nature. For example:

There isn't need in worrying about it because what's going to happen is going to happen.
Don't like to think about such things.
I really don't have no hopes or wishes for the future because I know that they would be useless and would not come true. I just let the good Lord take care of everything.

If the types of fears and worries and wishes and hopes are any indication of the level of the needs which are being satisfied, it appears that almost all of the open country Mississippi residents in the six "low income" counties studied are still near the bottom of the need hierarchy. Thus even though most quality of life indicators showed an improvement for these counties, the open country residents have a long way to go before they approach the high levels of the hierarchy of needs.

Table 1. Selected Social and Economic Characteristics of the Counties Studied (1970 Data)

	Population		Percent rural non-farm	Percent rural farm	Median age	Median income	Median school years completed		Percent of families with income less than poverty level
							Male	Female	
County	White	Black							
Clay	9,517	9,306	40.4	14.0	24.5	$6,228	9.9	10.8	25.9
Coahoma	14,232	26,013	33.2	13.3	22.1	$4,304	8.3	8.9	42.8
Holmes	7,345	15,743	59.0	17.3	23.0	$3,089	8.1	8.9	53.0
Lawrence	7,553	11,290	81.9	18.1	27.0	$5,049	9.9	10.6	36.6
Neshoba	15,091	4,098	48.6	20.7	29.3	$5,504	9.9	10.6	29.9
Tunica	3,225	8,614	48.4	51.6	19.9	$2,885	6.0	8.0	55.6
Mississippi	1,394,921	815,626	43.7	11.8	25.1	$6,071	10.4	10.9	28.9

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, U. S. Census of Population: 1970. General Social and Economic Characteristics. Final Report PC(1)-C26 Mississippi. USGPO. Washington, D.C., 1970.

Table 2. Selected Characteristics of Respondents

	Total	Black	White
Sex			
Male	40%	43%	38%
Female	60%	57%	62%
Age			
Under 35	16.0%	12.2%	19.1%
35-49	20.0%	20.9%	19.2%
50-64	31.7%	32.4%	31.1%
65 +	32.3%	34.5%	30.6%
Education			
Less than 9th Grade	55.0%	81.8%	33.3%
Some High School	21.5%	12.3%	29.0%
High School Diploma	12.4%	3.4%	19.7%
1 - 4 Years of College	10.8%	2.5%	17.5%
Master's Degree or Above	0.3%	--	0.5%
Occupation			
Homemaker	3.0%	4.1%	2.2%
Farm operator or manager	9.7%	4.7%	13.7%
Farm laborer or foreman	15.7%	27.7%	6.0%
Manager, proprietor (except farm, professional, technical)	1.5%	--	2.7%
Sales	3.0%	0.7%	4.9%
Clerical	0.3%	--	0.5%
Craftsman and Foreman	3.3%	--	6.0%
Operatives	5.7%	8.1%	3.8%
Service Workers	1.5%	0.7%	2.2%
Domestic Service	1.0%	2.0%	--
Labor	13.6%	11.5%	15.3%
Unpaid family labor	--	--	--
Disabled	15.1%	18.2%	12.6%
Retired	25.7%	21.6%	29.0%
Unemployed	0.3%	0.7%	--
Military service	--	--	--
No information	0.6%	--	1.1%
Number in Sample	331	148	183

Table 3. Types of Fears and Worries of Open Country Mississippians about the Future

Type of Fear or Worry	Total Sample	Blacks	Whites
Economic	34.3%(70)	37.0%(41)	31.2%(29)
Health	27.0%(55)	21.6%(24)	33.3%(31)
Children	23.5%(48)	27.9%(31)	18.3%(17)
Crime	4.9%(10)	2.7%(3)	7.5%(7)
Other	10.3%(21)	10.8%(12)	9.7%(9)
Total Fears and Worries Mentioned	100%(204)	100%(111)	100%(93)

Table 4. Types of Wishes and Hopes for the Future of Open Country Mississippians

Type of Wish or Hope	Total Sample	Blacks	Whites
Economic	26.4%(93)	28.6%(54)	23.8%(39)
Housing	21.2%(75)	20.1%(38)	22.6%(37)
Health	20.7%(73)	20.1%(38)	21.3%(35)
Children	18.1%(64)	19.6%(37)	16.5%(27)
Religion	7.7%(27)	6.3%(12)	9.1%(15)
Other	5.9%(21)	5.3%(10)	6.7%(11)
Total Wishes and Hopes Mentioned	100%(353)	100%(189)	100%(164)

FOOTNOTES

[1]See the county selection procedure section of this paper for the criteria used to establish these as low income counties.

[2]These segments had been selected for the S-44 project, a predecessor of the S-79 project. For a more detailed discussion of the sampling procedure, see "Sample Design for the Regional Rural Sociology Project, S-44," 1960.

[3]For further information on the sampling procedure, see, for example: A. L. Coleman, et. al., 1973; and Hanns G. Pieper, et. al., 1974.

[4]The term typology is used in a loose sense because it was necessary, for parsimony, to include a miscellaneous category.

REFERENCES

Clark, James V.

1960 "Motivation in Work Groups: A Tentative View," Human Organization, 19: 199-208.

Coleman, A. L., C. M. Coughenour and A. V. Gabbard and D. Zierath

1973 "Rural Development and the Quality of Life in Harlan, Perry, Whitley and Wolfe Counties: Summaries of Data from Surveys of Households in 1961 and 1973," RS-35 to 38, University of Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station, Department of Sociology.

Frese, W.

1975 "Changes in the Roads and Transportation Systems, Housing, Public Utilities, and the 'Traditional' Level-of-Living Items as Perceived by Open Country Household Residents in Six Southern States: 1960-1975," Rural Sociology in the South: 1975, Proceedings (Rural Sociology Section) Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Frese, W., C. R. Sollie and F. O. Jones

1975a Northeast Extension District, *Changes in Quality of Life: 1960-1970*, Mississippi State University, Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Sociology and Rural Life Series, Number 27.

1975b Northwest Extension District, *Changes in Quality of Life: 1960-1970*, Mississippi State University, Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Sociology and Rural Life Series, Number 28.

1975c Southeast Extension District, *Changes in Quality of Life: 1960-1970*, Mississippi State University, Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Sociology and Rural Life Series, Number 29.

Hagood, M. J., G. K. Bowels and R. R. Mount

1957 Farm Operators Family Level-of-Living Indexes for Counties of the United States, 1945, 1950, and 1954, Statistical Bulletin No. 204, USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Washington, D.C.

Jones, F. O., W. Frese and C. R. Sollie

1975 Southwest Extension District, *Changes in Quality of Life: 1960-1970*, Mississippi State University, Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Sociology and Rural Life Series, Number 30.

Maslow, A. H.

1970 Motivation and Personality, New York: Harper and Row.

Pieper, H. G., N. A. Holt and H. M. Miller

1974 "Perceptions of Quality of Life in Rural Open-Country Areas: A Case Study," Rural Sociology in the South: 1974, Proceedings (Rural Sociology

Section) Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists, Memphis, Tennessee.

"Sample Design for the Regional Rural Sociology Project, S-44," unpublished
1960 paper, Department of Statistics, North Carolina State University.

Sollie, C.R., W. Frese and F. O. Jones
1975 Changes in Quality of Life in Mississippi: 1960-1970, Bulletin 824, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station.